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Sudan: Short-Term Prospects for the Nimeiri Regime

Special National Intelligence Estimate

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SUDAN: SHORT-TERM PROSPECTS FOR THE NIMEIRI REGIME

Information available as of 13 February 1985 was used in the preparation of this Estimate, which was approved by the National Foreign Intelligence Board on that date.

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THIS ESTIMATE IS ISSUED BY THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE.

THE NATIONAL FOREIGN INTELLIGENCE BOARD CONCURS.

The following intelligence organizations participated in the preparation of the Estimate:

The Central Intelligence Agency, the Defense Intelligence Agency, the National Security Agency, and the intelligence organizations of the Departments of State and the Treasury.

Also Participating:

The Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Department of the Army

The Director of Naval Intelligence, Department of the Navy

The Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, Department of the Air Force

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CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
KEY JUDGMENTS.....	1
DISCUSSION	5
The Setting	5
Mounting Problems and Narrowing Options.....	5
The Southern Insurgency	5
Economic Problems and Prospects.....	7
The Northern Opposition.....	9
Loyalty of the Security Forces	12
The External Dimension.....	12
Relations With Traditional Friends and Allies.....	13
Nimeiri's Foes	14
Possible Scenarios.....	15
Nimeiri Hangs On: His Strengths and Weaknesses.....	15
Senior Officers Step In.....	16
Middle-Grade or Junior Officers Seize Power	16
A Civilian-Military Coalition.....	16
Implications for the United States.....	16
If Nimeiri Remains in Power	16
If Nimeiri Falls	17

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KEY JUDGMENTS

We believe Sudanese President Nimeiri's chances for remaining in power through 1985 have diminished to even. His survival will depend mainly on his performance in meeting economic and political challenges, sustaining the perception by his opponents that he retains US and Egyptian support, and, most important, retaining the loyalty of the military and security forces.

Nimeiri is still a skilled politician who is willing to respond aggressively to challenges. To stay in power, he can be expected to use the same kinds of sudden gestures and policy reversals that have kept his opponents off balance since he became President in May 1969. Nimeiri's isolation and religious preoccupations probably will continue

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ism, Nimeiri will be hard pressed to overcome the growing perception among Sudanese military officers that he has outlived his usefulness.

Since last autumn, the insurgency in the south has become a major challenge to the regime. Nimeiri has no apparent military or political solution in sight. Government forces are plagued by low morale and severe logistic problems, and they are incapable of quelling the Libyan- and Ethiopian-backed Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA), which has been greatly strengthened by an influx of recruits. The SPLA and other southerners deeply distrust Nimeiri and have been unresponsive to his conciliatory gestures.

We expect the SPLA will continue to refuse to negotiate with Nimeiri. It probably will step up military pressure on the government as long as it retains Libyan and Ethiopian support. This will mean more defections and desertions of government troops, military defeats in the south, and a greater potential for a coup attempt by disgruntled military officers.

The Sudanese economy is in a crisis characterized by depressed business activity, serious shortages of fuel and food, and an inability to meet foreign financial obligations. Governmental mismanagement is at the root of these problems, but other contributing factors are drought and the insurgency, which has halted oil operations in the south and meant an added financial burden to pay for military operations.

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Khartoum and the IMF are at an impasse over financial arrears and the lack of economic reform, and this has also meant a suspension of most foreign aid. Khartoum probably will delay significant reform in the expectation that the United States will provide aid anyway. Despite the efforts of the United States and other friends, the Nimeiri government probably will not make reforms satisfactory to the IMF, and renewed agreement with the IMF is therefore unlikely. This will continue the financial/economic crisis and guarantee continuing shortages and reduced foreign aid.

Opposition elements are making new efforts to work together for Nimeiri's ouster. Northern political factions revolve largely around Islamic sects and include groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood and the Ansars, although small leftist groups such as the Communist Party and the Ba'th Party also are engaged in antiregime activity. National fronts—some with Libyan backing—have reemerged abroad, and extreme leftists are attempting to find common cause with Muslim and southern groups, organized labor, and students. Nimeiri may have supplied the leadership for revolt when he recently released from prison Sadiq Al Mahdi, leader of the large Ansar sect. The regime would face an especially difficult problem if the Ansars joined forces with the Muslim Brotherhood, which Nimeiri has sought to blame for the more unpopular aspects of Islamization.

Nimeiri's usual tactics of reconciliation and divide-and-conquer are unlikely to enable him to control the northern opposition as well during the coming year as in the past. His opponents sense that he is in deep trouble domestically. His narrowed options in dealing with the opposition will lead him to rely more heavily on strict security measures—including possibly a renewal of the state of emergency—which would immobilize the opposition only temporarily.

Civil unrest in northern cities, perhaps sparked by shortages of food or fuel, could be the catalyst for any concerted move against Nimeiri. Students and organized labor probably would play major roles in such unrest. The Communists and other leftists can be expected to use their considerable influence in labor unions and universities to exploit grievances.

Qadhafi's support for the SPLA and other Sudanese dissidents and his long record of trying to undermine Nimeiri make Libyan-Sudanese relations a key factor in Nimeiri's immediate future. There is a chance Nimeiri will respond to Qadhafi's overtures for a reconciliation and reach an agreement to suspend support to each other's opponents. Nimeiri would view such a reconciliation not as a replacement for his

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ties to the US but rather as a temporary measure that would remove the burden of Libyan subversion while he tries to solve his domestic problems.

Similar rapprochements with Ethiopia and the USSR also are possible. Khartoum recently has attempted to improve the tone of its relations with Moscow, but those with Addis Ababa continue to worsen.

Reconciliations with any of these countries are unlikely to bail Nimeiri completely out of his difficulties with regard to the south or the economy. They could, however, buy Nimeiri a few more months' favor with military officers, who would look for, but probably not find, signs of improvement in the southern security situation.

Military officers already blame Nimeiri for the defeats in the south and the economic mess and are apprehensive about his push to Islamize Sudan. We believe the chances of a coup have increased significantly in the past year, even though Nimeiri has sought to placate military officers with special pay and perquisites and the security services closely monitor possible coup plotters.

Any successor regime would have to deal with claims on political power from groups kept in check under Nimeiri—such as the Islamic sects, military factions, and radical parties—as well as face the economic crisis and ongoing southern insurgency.

A military government dominated by senior officers probably would be well disposed toward the United States but initially would try to distance itself somewhat from US policies in order to demonstrate its independence and thereby bolster its domestic support. If only temporarily, the new government might suspend US military access and prepositioning of equipment, but would still depend primarily on US economic and military support. It would place a high priority on negotiating a settlement with the southern insurgents. Selected civilian leaders might be co-opted into government, but the successor regime would be essentially military.

A less likely scenario would be a military-civilian coalition including one or more of the Islamic sects. Such a regime would place more emphasis on Islamization and less on a settlement in the south than a wholly military government. It would shun close ties to either superpower. An even less likely, but still possible, alternative would be a regime led by radical leftist junior or middle-grade officers. The Soviets and Libyans could have increased opportunities to gain influence, while US interests would be seriously damaged in Sudan and the region.

While we do not expect any broad-based coup plot to succeed—Nimeiri's security and information sources would uncover such a plot—a

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move by a small faction could well find the officer corps sitting on its hands rather than rallying to Nimeiri. Many senior officers would be more concerned about positioning themselves for post-Nimeiri jockeying for power than about committing themselves early. A narrowly based plot by ethnic Nuban soldiers in 1984, which was ultimately compromised, demonstrated this attitude when several senior officers learned of the coup plot but did not inform Nimeiri.

Since coming to power in 1969, Nimeiri has overcome two major coup attempts and numerous coup plots and has demonstrated strengths which, while attenuated by events, have not disappeared. These strengths include:

- A loyal and reasonably effective security service.
- The loyalty of key military units in the capital area.
- An ability to shuffle key political faction leaders, co-opting some, and distancing himself from others, in a manner that has confused, intimidated, and divided the opposition.
- Periodic purging of the senior officer corps to eliminate potential rivals.
- An ability to change both domestic and foreign policies quickly and drastically to confound opponents and obtain new sources of support.
- An ability to manipulate foreign supporters to produce both additional assistance and other support to surmount crises.

In the event of civil disturbances, many military and security force commanders would hesitate to use harsh measures to restore order. On the other hand, a bloody repression by security units of demonstrations could trigger even larger popular reactions.

Initially, Nimeiri's successors will be preoccupied with consolidating power and fending off challenges from political rivals. Sudan's dire economic needs will give the United States, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia considerable influence and leverage with any successor regime. Successors to Nimeiri probably will quickly recognize that only the West is in a position to provide sufficient economic assistance to keep the Sudanese economy afloat. However, they might seek improved relations with Libya, Ethiopia, and the USSR in an effort to reduce foreign support for the southern insurgency.

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DISCUSSION

The Setting

1. President Nimeiri's position has significantly deteriorated since the Intelligence Community last addressed the stability of Sudan in 1983,¹ to the point that his hold on power this year is seriously threatened. The controversial policies he instituted in 1983—division of the south into three smaller regions and the declaration of Islamic law—have renewed the traditional resentment held by the animist-Christian south over northern Arab-Muslim domination and have been exploited by a Libyan- and Ethiopian-backed insurgency. Moreover, the already poor economic conditions have been complicated further by the insurgency and drought-related shortages of food and energy, and an ever-increasing influx of refugees from neighboring countries.

2. Meanwhile, the pragmatism that once was the hallmark of Nimeiri's leadership style has not been much in evidence in the last year, and he seems less able to cope with the country's mounting problems.

His orientation [redacted] views has led to dogmatic and erratic policies that have narrowed his political base, isolated him from constructive criticism, and impaired his political judgments.

Mounting Problems and Narrowing Options

The Southern Insurgency

3. Since the autumn of 1984 the insurgency in the south has grown from a distant annoyance to a major challenge to the Nimeiri regime. The rebels now have unrestricted mobility throughout the countryside and can interdict most major roads south of Ayod and the White Nile south of Bor. They also have cut the single rail line to the south. Extensive mining of the roads has forced the military to use armored personnel carriers to lead patrols. The rebels have attained their goal of shutting down southern development projects, including the Jonglei Canal and oil operations.

4. The insurgents' current operations are designed to attract wider international recognition, demonstrate the government's lack of control over the south and to expand their own influence into Equatoria Region, where the Sudanese People's Liberation Army has been weaker than in other portions of the south. In particular, the rebels have been cutting transportation links to Juba, the regional capital, as the first step in a siege of the town.

5. We estimate there are 12,000 to 15,000 men in the SPLA, 6,000 to 10,000 of whom are operating in Sudan, the remainder in camps in Ethiopia. Ethiopian and Libyan support has provided the insurgents with a steady supply of weapons such as SA-7s, mortars, and heavy machineguns, as well as ammunition, radios, and food. Ethiopia provides safehavens to stockpile supplies and train recruits. SPLA intelligence appears accurate and timely, and so far they have not suffered a major defeat.

6. The Sudanese Army remains incapable of containing, much less quelling, the insurgency. Its primary problems are incompetent leadership, low morale, ethnic tensions, mediocre intelligence, and shortages of supplies, equipment, and fuel. The SPLA's tactical successes and well-orchestrated propaganda broadcasts have severely affected the morale of troops stationed in the south. Northern soldiers view duty in the south as punishment, and some have refused orders assigning them there. Also, northern officers doubt the loyalty of their southern troops. Dinka and other southern tribesmen in the Army units stationed in Juba were recently disarmed and are soon to be transferred from the area.

7. The Sudanese Army has between 7,000 and 9,000 combat troops stationed in the three southern regions. Most of the army's operations until early January were reactions to rebel activity, partly because the military's intelligence on rebel plans has often been unreliable and untimely. More recently, government forces have attempted to block rebel operations, but to date they have been unsuccessful. Moreover, military units in the south are running out of fuel, forcing them to cut back operations to conserve remaining supplies.

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8. The Sudanese Air Force has had only minimal participation in southern operations. Pilots are reluctant to fly helicopters, transports, or combat aircraft to or in the south. Some have feigned illness, and others have damaged their aircraft to avoid combat duty. The Sudanese may deploy MIG-21s to Juba, but they would be of little use in a ground support role and are likely to present an inviting target for rebel forces. A recent Egyptian offer of rockets for Sudanese helicopters will be of little use as long as Sudanese helicopter pilots refuse to fly combat missions. The reluctance of transport pilots to fly makes resupply especially difficult, because air routes are the only remaining transportation links to government garrisons.

9. As long as Libya and Ethiopia aid the SPLA, we expect security in the south to continue to deteriorate, with the insurgents keeping the upper hand. The Sudanese military lacks both the necessary resolve and the equipment and logistic capability to fight a prolonged war. Moreover, Khartoum is unlikely to receive enough additional military assistance to change this situation. Nimeiri has had little success in obtaining major equipment from his allies, although Egypt is providing small shipments of munitions. Nimeiri's recent visits to China and Romania resulted in several promises but little concrete support.

10. The rebels probably will try to render southern airfields unusable in an attempt to cut off the government's supply lines completely. The insurgents may capture an area or a town, but they still lack the capability to hold large amounts of territory indefinitely. They can be expected to increase their recruiting efforts, especially in Equatoria, although tribal differences and Equatorian reluctance to become involved in a new civil war will limit their success. The festering southern problem will take an increasingly heavy toll on the morale and cohesion of government units, will generate increased defections and desertions, and will increase the regime's vulnerability to a military coup.

11. Over the next year, Nimeiri will no longer be able to ignore developments in the south to concentrate on shoring up his position in the north. Foreign donors, upset over the continued shutdown of oil and water projects, will be reluctant to provide Khartoum economic support. [redacted] by the low morale generated by losses to the rebels, are encouraging the President to explore all possible avenues to a solution of the southern problem, including an accommodation with Libya and Ethiopia.

12. While a military solution in the south is not a realistic option for the regime, prospects for a political settlement also are dim. The conciliatory gestures Nimeiri made toward the south in late 1984, largely at the suggestion of allies, were too limited to produce results. His offer to give southerners a choice regarding administrative redivision of the region is unlikely to bring a positive response, because southern politicians themselves are divided on the question. Southerners probably were struck more by the negative aspects of Nimeiri's speeches during recent visits to the region, in which he gave little hope that he would remove corrupt southern governors or implement a plan for economic aid to the south. The President also extolled the virtues of Islam in a speech in Juba in early January and thereby heightened fears that he intends to enforce Islamic law in the south. Nimeiri's unresponsiveness to a variety of southern concerns have contributed to the failure of his efforts to reach agreements with minor insurgent groups.

13. Most important, SPLA leader John Garang [redacted] has consistently rebuffed Nimeiri's overtures. The SPLA deeply distrusts Nimeiri, continues to call publicly for his removal, and is unlikely to soften its position as long as it inflicts losses on the Sudanese Army and expands its membership and area of operations. Even if Garang were to negotiate, his current strength means he probably would make demands unacceptable to the Nimeiri regime. Such demands probably would include rescission of Islamic law and abrogation of the "integration" agreement with Egypt.

14. Nimeiri thus is unlikely to find a solution to the southern problem this year. The problem would be more manageable and less threatening to his rule, however, if:

- The SPLA were neutralized by infighting over the personal, ideological, and tribal divisions that have historically divided southerners.
- Libya and Ethiopia suspended aid to the SPLA while Khartoum received an influx of military support from its allies.

We believe, however, that neither of these developments is likely in the next year.

Economic Problems and Prospects

15. In common with many other Third World countries, Sudan's current economic disorder stems largely from profligate borrowing during the last

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decade, coupled with economic mismanagement and adverse developments in its terms of trade. Despite generous debt rescheduling agreements, Sudan remains unable to meet its debt service obligations. According to the most recent data, Khartoum was \$316 million in arrears to international creditors at the end of 1984. Sudan's total foreign debt of over \$9 billion exceeds its GNP.

16. Of more immediate importance, Sudan has a very serious arrears problem with the IMF. The 1984 standby agreement was suspended almost immediately when Sudan fell into arrears to the IMF. As a result, the IBRD Consultative Group and Paris Club rescheduling exercises have been suspended as well. Despite extensive contacts with the IMF, Sudan has not taken steps to eliminate the arrears (currently more than \$100 million, the largest of any IMF member, which will rise to \$267 million by yearend if no repayments are made) and clear the way for new IMF financing and Paris Club debt relief. Under general procedures that apply to all IMF members, no program can be approved while Sudan is in arrears, and failure to clear up the arrears could possibly lead to expulsion from the IMF. Even if Sudan does clear up its arrears, moreover, any future IMF lending will be limited in light of Sudan's past heavy borrowing and the IMF's general policies about lending to members having prolonged use of its resources.

17. The confrontation with the IMF also has caused most major donors to slow their disbursements of financial assistance. From January to June 1984 only \$168 million in official aid was transmitted to Sudan, out of commitments of \$625 million made for the entire year. The slowdown appears to have continued during the second half of 1984.

18. The IMF has recommended several reforms, including a 50-percent devaluation of the official exchange rate, a floating free market rate, substantial price increases in sugar, bread, and petroleum, and various tax increases and budget cuts. We believe Nimeiri will seek to modify this package and will delay introduction of any reforms until he is convinced that Sudan's major donor, the United States, will accept no further dilution or delay of proposed policy adjustments.

19. The regime's ability to cope with drought-related shortages of food and energy and general economic stagnation will also affect its chances for survival. The distribution of foodgrains so far has been fairly equitable, ensuring that no region has suffered disproportionately, but the food deficit problem is

unlikely to disappear.

estimates the Sudanese grain shortfall to be at least 1 million metric tons in 1985 after all currently pledged food aid from abroad is deducted. Sudan's severe foreign exchange shortage largely precludes commercial imports of food by the government, and so responsibility for making up the deficit is likely to fall on already overburdened international donors. (See inset on page 9 and map, figure 2, on page 10.)

20. Economic activity in general remains severely depressed. Manufacturers have been badly squeezed by a combination of recession, new taxes, and price controls that has throttled production to less than one-third of capacity. Fuel supplies are critically low. Private investment in the economy has also sunk to negligible levels, as most investors await the latest reform package as well as a clearer indication of how the government's Islamization policies will affect business practices in Sudan.

21. The insurgency in the south has stopped development of Sudan's oil resources, the exploitation of which was expected to have begun earning significant amounts of foreign exchange in 1986. Chevron holds the principal oil concession in the south and refuses to return to the area, despite veiled threats from the Sudanese Government that it may turn elsewhere to develop this resource. The recent establishment of the Sudan National Oil Company, a joint venture between the government and Saudi entrepreneur Adnan Khashoggi, may have been intended to make this threat appear more realistic. We believe the deteriorating security situation in the south, however, will deter anyone from operating in this region in the immediate future.

22. Military operations in the south are also financially straining the government.

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The growing cost of military operations could force the government to abandon monetary restraints and thereby worsen inflation.

23. We doubt the Nimeiri regime will be capable of making the structural changes needed to stimulate economic growth. As previous efforts at reform have shown, the Sudanese, for political and administrative reasons, usually are unable to maintain the continuity and momentum needed to see a program through to its completion. In addition, the government's propensity to misappropriate and squander resources will severely compromise any adjustment process.

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Worsening Drought and Famine Conditions

Nimeiri's political and economic problems are compounded by the effects of Africa's devastating drought and famine. Sudan is among the continent's hardest hit nations, and more than 4 million of its people—roughly 20 percent of the population—are now at risk. Sudan's projected grain deficit for 1985 is now estimated at at least 1 million metric tons, almost all of which will have to come in the form of food aid because of Sudan's current economic shambles.

Sudan's traditional willingness to accept refugees is adding to the burden. [] estimates some 200,000 Ugandans, 25,000 to 30,000 Chadians, and 525,000 to 575,000 Ethiopians are living in Sudan. More ominous still, [] another 250,000 to 300,000 Ethiopian drought victims are likely to enter Sudan by July 1985.

The current influx of about 3,000 Ethiopian refugees per day is straining Sudan's already overburdened relief organizations and contributing to tension between Ethiopia and Sudan. Nimeiri has warned that refugees constitute an excessive burden on his government and that international efforts should focus on stemming the flow of refugees. The Mengistu regime, however, already has stated that stepped-up food assistance from Sudan into rebel-held areas in northern Ethiopia runs the risk of provoking a military response by Addis Ababa. Meanwhile, recent reporting indicates that dis-

ease, shortages of water, and lack of proper sanitation and housing are contributing to an alarmingly high death rate in the relief camps.

Although the government—through the Commissioner of Refugees—cooperates fully with other government and private relief donors, serious coordination problems—compounded by growing corruption—have surfaced as the numbers at risk rise. Moreover, while Port Sudan has relatively good offloading and grain storage capacity that can be expanded, distribution and storage in country is difficult. Potential bottlenecks include constant fuel shortages that plague ground transport and internal gravel-surfaced runways that limit the type and number of aircraft that can land. The onset of the rainy season this spring will further complicate distribution of emergency assistance.

Famine conditions are likely to worsen this year, and we see little prospect for short-term improvements in the government's ability to control the influx or meet the needs of refugees or its own population. Further deterioration in the food situation will further heighten tension with Ethiopia, will spark conflict between Sudanese and migrants competing for scarce resources, and could provoke demonstrations against the government's handling of the food crisis. Demonstrations could take on an anti-US tone if the Sudanese perceive that Washington's aid favors Ethiopian refugees.

24. The recent establishment of a Supreme Council for National Economy, chaired by the President, offers a faint ray of hope for more coherent economic decisionmaking and for the leadership needed to sustain difficult policy adjustments. Nimeiri's past behavior, however, suggests that his interest and close personal attention will not last much beyond the immediate objective of securing renewed Western financing. We believe that without the President's active commitment to reform, economic decision making will revert to its previous inconsistency and lack of focus.

25. Nonetheless, despite shortages and economic stagnation, there have so far been only a few initial signs of growing discontent, including small disturbances in early February over shortages of bread and fuel. Many urban residents appear to believe that drought, the influx of Ethiopian refugees, and the intransigence of international donors share blame with the government for the current economic mess.

26. Nimeiri is likely to resort to increasingly desperate measures to avert economic collapse if foreign donors continue to withhold full financial support. The government reportedly has already committed a sig-

nificant portion of its crops of cotton and gum arabic to a company owned by Khashoggi, as payment or collateral for badly needed crude oil. Similar deals with opportunistic middlemen could become more frequent if alternative financing for Sudan's critical import requirements is not found.

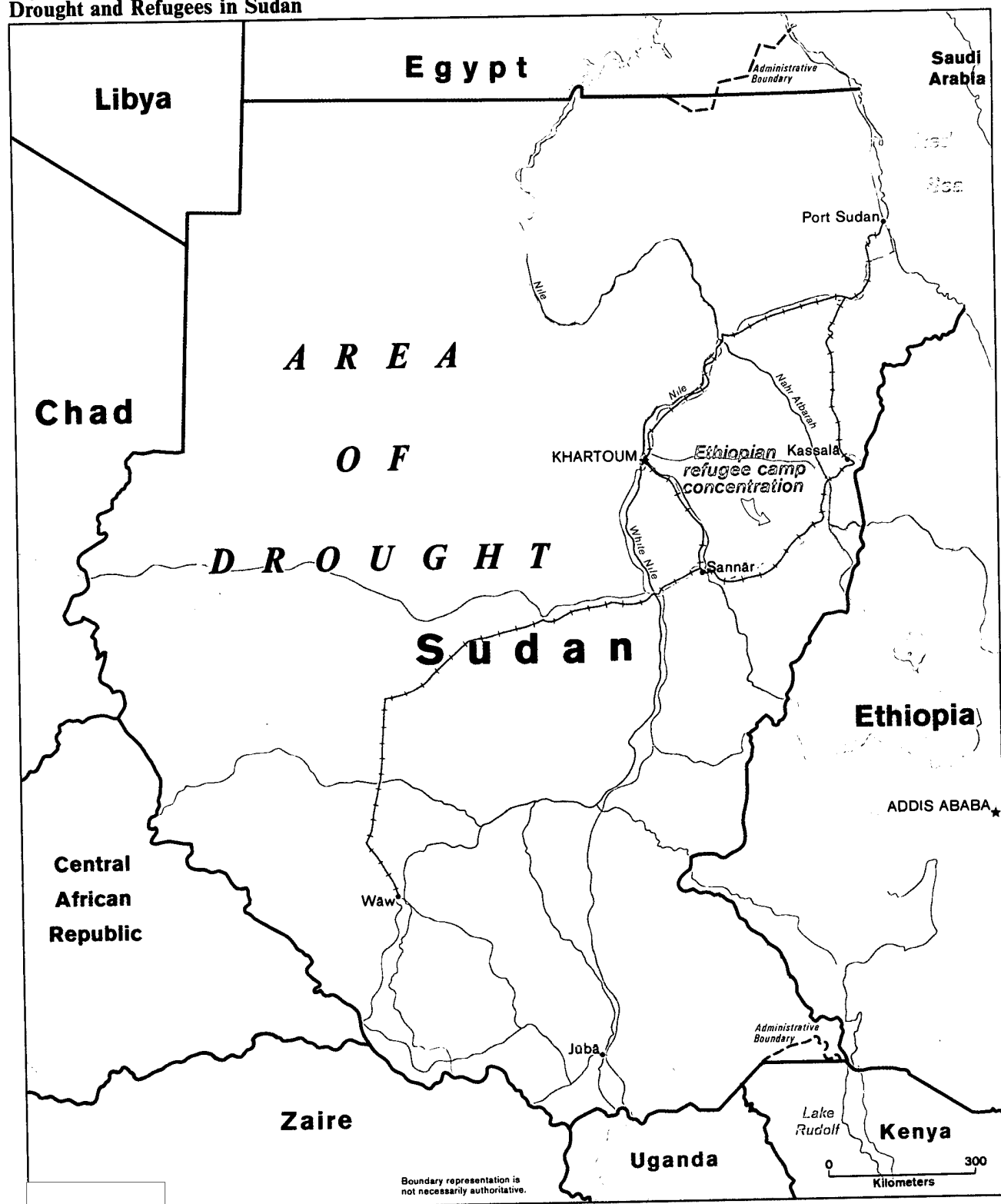
The Northern Opposition

27. Nimeiri so far has kept his northern opponents in check through his usual tactics of alternatively moving against right and left, pitting groups against each other, co-opting opponents through periodic reconciliations, and maintaining control through arrests and surveillance. Opposition elements still are divided by traditional animosities and suspicions, and they have failed to achieve any effective penetration of the military and security forces. Over the past year, however, Nimeiri's growing isolation and authoritarianism have led the opposition to make new efforts to work together to remove him. National fronts—some with Libyan backing—have reemerged abroad, and extreme leftists are attempting to find common cause with members of the Ansar and Khatmiyyah Muslim sects, southern groups, and labor organizations.

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Figure 2
Drought and Refugees in Sudan



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28. The Ansars, with some 5-6 million adherents, remain potentially the strongest opposition force in Sudan. Nimeiri may have supplied the leadership for revolt when he recently released from prison Sadiq Al Mahdi [] leader of the Ansars and of their banned political arm, the Umma Party. Sadiq, who was involved in an abortive Libyan-backed coup in 1976 and reconciled with Nimeiri shortly afterward, seems to have regained his credibility as an opposition leader by openly breaking with Nimeiri shortly before his imprisonment in 1983. To gain his release, Sadiq reportedly made no promises to come to terms with Nimeiri again or to refrain from opposition activity.

29. Nonetheless, Sadiq will need time to consolidate his leadership among the Ansars. He may move abroad, as he did in the mid-1970s, to try to organize an opposition coalition. Meanwhile, Ansars in the armed forces—where they are overrepresented—are likely to be more sympathetic now to any coup plotting by Sadiq than they were in 1976.

30. The Khatmiyyah sect, which is nearly as large as the Ansar, probably will continue its tacit support for Nimeiri, although individual members will work against the regime. The more leftist, secular members of the sect, who have operated in exile as the National (later Democratic) Unionist Party, have been divided and ineffectual since the death of their leader, Sharif al-Hindi, in 1982. Some elements of the party, however, continue to receive Libyan support and have joined opposition coalitions abroad.

31. The Muslim Brotherhood's support for the regime has become more doubtful during the past six months, as Nimeiri has sought to blame the Brotherhood for the more unpopular aspects of Islamization. The Brotherhood's leader, Hassan El Turabi [] still holds a government post as presidential adviser, but Nimeiri has publicly referred to the group as the "devil brothers" and stated they were being investigated for stockpiling arms. Nimeiri's attempt to discredit the Brotherhood appears to be working, as indicated by its loss of university elections last fall—its first such setback in several years. The Brotherhood is well organized, however, and it would pose a major problem for the regime if Turabi joined forces with his brother-in-law, Sadiq Al Mahdi.

32. Leftist groups, particularly the Communist and Ba'th parties, remain under intense scrutiny by the security services. The Iraqi-backed Ba'th Party is the smaller and less effective of the two, although several Ba'thists have been arrested in the past year for

antiregime activity. The Communists continue to operate underground and abroad and reportedly have more than 10,000 members and sympathizers. They appear to be increasing their activities, and Sudanese authorities blamed them for labor unrest last spring.

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33. The latest and potentially the most serious attempt to achieve a coalition of opposition elements is the Sudanese National Salvation Front, which began to form in mid-1984 from a base in the United Kingdom. It reportedly has Libyan backing and includes members of the Communist, Umma, and Democratic Unionist Parties, southern opposition groups, and independent national figures. Its stated goal is the ouster of Nimeiri, the establishment of an interim government to revitalize Sudan's economic and political institutions, and eventually free elections. The Front will become a formidable challenger to the regime if it overcomes ideological divisions among its participants and develops sympathizers in the military. The Front, however, is weakened by personal and ideological rivalries.

34. The ability of oppositionists within Sudan to make common cause may have been increased by the execution in mid-January for heresy of Mahmoud Mohammed Taha, leader of the Republican Brothers. Nimeiri evidently permitted the execution to proceed as a warning to his opponents and an effort to forestall plotting against him by the Muslim Brotherhood, which has opposed Taha's "progressive" Islamic views. Taha's own group is small and politically insignificant, but the hanging of the aged leader stimulated open expressions of disapproval from a variety of Sudanese who have grown impatient with the more oppressive aspects of Islamization.

35. The catalyst for any concerted move against Nimeiri by northern opposition groups is likely to be civil unrest, perhaps sparked by severe shortages of food or energy. Students and organized labor probably would play major roles in such unrest. Student groups, which often have been a barometer of public opinion in Sudan, helped to bring down a military government in 1964 and already have participated in several anti-Nimeiri demonstrations. Labor has become increasingly restive in the past year, as judges, lawyers, engineers, doctors, and university employees went on strike or threatened to do so. Leftist parties can be expected to use their considerable influence in labor unions to exploit grievances.

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36. Nimeiri's usual tactics of reconciliation and divide-and-conquer are unlikely to enable him to control the northern opposition's activities as well

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during the coming year as in the past. Opposition elements appear to sense that Nimeiri is in deep trouble domestically, and they will try to position themselves to take maximum advantage of any opportunity to oust him in the near term. Nimeiri's narrowed options in dealing with the opposition will lead him to rely more heavily on strict security measures—possibly including a renewal of the state of emergency, which would immobilize the opposition only temporarily. The willingness of the military and security forces, however, to suppress large urban demonstrations is questionable.

Loyalty of the Security Forces

37. Nimeiri's policies have steadily eroded support for his regime within the Sudanese military, which brought him to power in May 1969 and has remained loyal in the face of numerous coup attempts. Probably the most serious grievance is Nimeiri's policy toward the south. Senior officers generally prefer a political solution, recognizing that a military one is virtually impossible. They are concerned that north-south divisions have irreparably harmed the unity of the armed forces and that successive military losses to the insurgents have caused a crisis of morale and discipline.

38. Middle-grade officers blame the poor performance in the south on the incompetence of their seniors—including President Nimeiri, who holds the titles of Minister of Defense and Commander in Chief of the armed forces. Many attribute the lack of leadership in part to Nimeiri's dismissal two years ago of more than 20 of the most competent senior officers for criticism of his policies. Nimeiri's recent dismissal of the deputy chief of staff for operations was unsuccessful in deflecting blame for the Army's recent losses in the south. Instead, it prompted officers to charge that Nimeiri tolerates the incompetence of Deputy Commander in Chief Suwar El Dahab because he is a former schoolmate of Nimeiri's and because his lack of ambition poses no threat.

39. Many senior officers are apprehensive about Nimeiri's push to Islamize Sudan. They believe the implementation of Islamic law has impeded reconciliation with the animist-Christian south and hurt the cohesion of the armed forces. The abortive coup plot of October 1984, which involved many non-Muslim Nuban enlisted men [redacted] to be concerned that opposition to Islamization would lead to additional conspiracies in the enlisted ranks, which are about 40 percent non-Muslim. Many senior officers resent the intrusion of Islamic course

work into their daily routines and the constraints Islamization has imposed on their lifestyles. Last spring Nimeiri backed down when no senior officer would carry out the public lashing of several officers convicted of drunkenness and gambling.

40. Nimeiri clearly recognizes the military is his main power base, and he strives to retain its support. He personally selects officers and men for key units in the Khartoum area. Sudanese security services closely monitor malcontents and potential coup plotters.

41. In addition, Nimeiri has attempted to insulate his officer corps from economic problems with special pay and perquisites. These benefits, however, do not always compensate for inflation or alleviate shortages of food, fuel, and electricity. The poor economy is in part responsible for delays in promotion for large numbers of officers, many of them middle-grade officers with direct command over units. It has also limited the military's ability to acquire much-needed equipment to fight the insurgents in the south. Many officers blame the economic collapse and these consequences on mismanagement by the Nimeiri regime. The military traditionally has been reluctant to intervene in large-scale disturbances.

42. The loyalty of Sudan's other security services is not as critical as that of the armed forces but could affect Nimeiri's ability to withstand coup attempts or civil unrest. The State Security Organization appears loyal to the President, and the rivalry between it and the Military Intelligence Directorate helps to check independent moves by either one. The attitudes of the Sudanese police depend on satisfaction with pay, equipment, and benefits. Last year the chief of police complained directly to Nimeiri about low pay. We believe that low morale and insufficient equipment would make the police force unwilling or unable to contain large-scale civil disturbances in the Khartoum area.

The External Dimension

43. Nimeiri's foreign policy has been characterized by pragmatism and responsiveness to domestic needs, especially his own political survival. He has shown a capacity for sudden about-faces. Once a prominent client of the USSR, Nimeiri chilled his relations with Moscow after Sudanese Communists tried to overthrow him in 1971. In recent years Nimeiri has relied primarily on Egypt for military support, Saudi Arabia for economic aid, and the United States for both, making him a target for subversion by the Soviet-supported Libyan and Ethiopian regimes.

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44. In an interview in October 1984, Nimeiri suggested he was considering another reversal of foreign policy by complaining that the United States and other Western aid donors were slowing their assistance during a critical period because of their opposition to his Islamic line. He also said that, if he found himself with insufficient means to defeat the rebels in the south, he would have no hesitation in reaching a reconciliation with Libya, Ethiopia, and the USSR.

Relations With Traditional Friends and Allies

45. Nimeiri has played his "foreign cards" carefully and skillfully in the past. He has effectively transformed his claims on his principal foreign supporters—the United States, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia—into increased economic, political, and military assistance that enabled him to surmount previous crises. He can be expected to try to use the same claims for new bailouts and a relief from reform pressures. Those claims include a close alliance with Egypt, support to Camp David, avowed anti-Communism, support to Libyan oppositionists, extending military facilities to the United States, support for the emigration to Israel of Ethiopian Jewish refugees (the Falasha), and general foreign policy cooperation.

46. The United States, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia each will find its relations with Sudan more difficult to manage during 1985 than before, as Nimeiri faces a growing gap between the support he wants and the support he receives. The most immediate challenge for his friends and allies is economic, as Sudan's mounting arrears to the IMF and the indefinite suspension of its standby agreement have meant the interruption of bilateral aid programs. Washington embarked in late 1984—with the support of other key donors, including the Saudis—on a high-risk strategy intended to convince a reluctant Nimeiri of the necessity for Sudan to reach agreement with the IMF on a comprehensive reform program, which would become the basis for a new standby. Secretary Shultz formally notified Nimeiri in December 1984 that Washington would withhold disbursements of \$200 million in Economic Support Funds until Sudan agreed to measures similar to those proposed by the IMF.

47. Military assistance and its relationship to Nimeiri's policies toward the southern insurgency also are becoming friction points in Sudan's relations with its allies. Nimeiri may try to parry US pressure regarding these issues (and also lessen his own military's resentment over his southern policy) by offering unconditional negotiations with the SPLA. If the SPLA

rejected the offer—as it probably would—Nimeiri could then renew his claim that the SPLA is a tool of Ethiopian, Libyan, and Soviet interests. Barring a dramatic escalation of the insurgency, however, US-Sudanese differences over military aid will be less likely than economic issues to cause serious damage in US-Sudanese relations.

48. Egypt places high importance on having in Khartoum a regime sympathetic to its interests, but it is not committed to Nimeiri's political survival. President Mubarak has been concerned that Nimeiri's efforts at Islamization might stimulate demands by Egyptian fundamentalists for a similar program in Egypt. The Egyptians probably see no current alternative to Nimeiri, but they would be likely to stay neutral in any coup attempted by a group believed to be friendly toward Egypt.

49. Under Nimeiri, Sudan has signed a defensive alliance pact (1976) and a treaty of integration with Egypt (1982). During previous situations threatening Nimeiri, the Egyptians have responded to requests from Nimeiri for concrete gestures of security support by detailing infantry, antiaircraft, and air force units to the Khartoum area. Following the Libyan bombing of the radio station at Omdurman in March 1984, Egypt immediately sent to Sudan an SA-7 missile unit and later dispatched technicians to construct an SA-2 site. Recently, however, Cairo decided to withdraw these forces.

50. Cairo has consistently refused to supply troops to fight in the south, although it has provided small arms and ammunition and recently agreed to supply air-to-ground rockets for use on Sudanese helicopters. Egyptian officials are very pessimistic about the Sudanese regime's ability to achieve a military solution in the south. We believe they have urged the Sudanese to strive for a political solution, partly in the hope that work could then resume on the Jonglei Canal. Egypt considers the canal important in assuring its future supply of Nile River water.

51. We believe the Egyptians are likely to withhold dispatch of significant forces to Sudan to support Nimeiri against potential domestic opponents unless Cairo perceives the alternate leadership to be hostile to Egypt.

52. Saudi Arabia values Nimeiri's role in limiting Soviet expansion in the Red Sea region and in distributing assistance to Eritrean insurgents. It shares most of the US and Egyptian concerns, however, regarding economic reform and Nimeiri's policies toward the

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south. The Saudis also take a dim view of Nimeiri's brand of Islamization. Riyadh has become increasingly critical of corruption and mismanagement in Sudan. Second only to the United States as a source of Sudan's foreign aid, the Saudis have also slowed disbursement of their pledge of aid for 1984 of \$90 million to pressure Khartoum to enact economic reforms.

Nimeiri's Foes

53. *Libya.* Libyan leader Qadhafi repeatedly has attempted to overthrow or undermine Nimeiri since he backed Sudanese dissidents in two coup attempts in the mid-1970s. Tensions between the two leaders have grown further in the 1980s, as Qadhafi threatened Khartoum's security with his invasion of Chad and closer ties to Marxist Ethiopia. Support to each other's dissidents has fueled their quarrel. Libya's bombing of the radio station in Omdurman probably was intended to end anti-Qadhafi broadcasts and embarrass Nimeiri. Tripoli has also been the major source of economic and military support to the southern rebels. For his part, Nimeiri has supported Libyan dissident activity and given one dissident group a base in Sudan from which to operate.

54. Qadhafi, however, has made several diplomatic overtures to the Nimeiri regime since last year. The initiatives appear part of Qadhafi's broader efforts—including the political "union" with Morocco—to limit support for Libyan dissidents and lessen US influence in the region. Nimeiri initially was wary of Qadhafi's approaches but may now be more interested in an agreement to limit support to each other's dissidents, especially given the recent successes of the Libyan-backed rebels in the south. Nimeiri would view such a reconciliation not as a replacement for his ties to the United States but rather as a temporary measure to remove the burden of Libyan subversion while trying to solve his domestic problems.

55. Nimeiri's motives for a rapprochement with Libya also would have an economic dimension. He might expect that a curtailment of Libyan support for Sudanese insurgents would enable oil development to resume in the south. We believe, however, that a political settlement in the region would be needed for foreign investors to be confident enough to resume activity there. Moreover, we doubt that Libya, the USSR, or any other foreign power that is not currently an ally of Khartoum would provide the level of balance-of-payments financing that Sudan would require to weather its current economic difficulties. Finally, we do not believe that Qadhafi, whatever his

public pronouncements, would faithfully honor or implement the terms of any agreement.

56. *Ethiopia.* Ethiopian-Sudanese relations have been particularly sour ever since Ethiopian leader Mengistu, facing serious economic problems, signed the tripartite pact with Libya and South Yemen in 1981. In return for aid from Tripoli, Mengistu has provided sanctuary, training, and logistic support to Sudanese dissidents. At first Mengistu seemed half-hearted in living up to the pact with Libya. In the last two years, however, he has stepped up his assistance to Sudanese rebels, evidently in response to what he sees as Nimeiri's support for Eritrean and Tigrean insurgents.

57. In early 1984, Egypt unsuccessfully tried to mediate an improvement of relations between Ethiopia and Sudan. Addis Ababa canceled the talks, citing the Sudanese First Vice President's erroneous announcement that Khartoum was receiving an airlift of US arms. If Nimeiri reconciles with Qadhafi, Mengistu might reach his own accommodation with the Sudanese President. Similar agreements in the past have rarely lasted for long, but famine and refugee problems may now make the governments welcome a pause in their dispute. In any event, a rapprochement between Sudan and Ethiopia would be short lived, given each other's lack of control over their insurgent clients.

58. *USSR.* Khartoum has resisted Moscow's efforts since 1971 to improve relations, evidently because Nimeiri has been convinced the USSR is behind Libyan and Ethiopian efforts to destabilize his regime. In the last year, however, there are some indications Khartoum may be thinking of following Cairo's lead in improving its relations with the USSR, possibly in the hope of gaining new military aid and help in restraining Ethiopian and Libyan subversion. Nimeiri sent a representative to Soviet leader Andropov's funeral last year and has recently conducted a series of public, low-level cultural exchanges with Moscow. In addition, the speaker of the Sudanese parliament plans to make an official visit to the USSR in the near future.

59. The Soviets would be skeptical that any Libyan-Sudanese reconciliation would endure, but they probably would see certain advantages in such an agreement. Moscow might believe that Libya's improved position in Khartoum would reduce US influence there and possibly enhance its own. It might also calculate that improved Libyan-Sudanese relations would lead Khartoum to reduce support for opponents of Ethiopia's Marxist regime. The Soviets would proceed with

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caution, however, because either a Soviet-Sudanese or a Libyan-Sudanese reconciliation could undercut their efforts to improve relations with Egypt.

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Possible Scenarios

60. We believe President Nimeiri has an even chance to remain in power through 1985. His survival will depend mainly on his performance in meeting economic and political challenges, the perception by his opponents that he retains the full support of his US and Egyptian allies, and, most important, the loyalty of the military and security forces. The military is almost certain to play a major role in any successor government, regardless of whether the change occurs by constitutional means or Nimeiri is forced from office.

Nimeiri Hangs On: His Strengths and Weaknesses

61. Nimeiri is not without major assets that may allow him to hang on. First and foremost are his strong desire to rule and willingness to respond aggressively to challenges. He is a tough infighter, whose political skills and tenacity have given him an edge over most of his opponents during 16 years in power. Nimeiri's preoccupation with his health and commitment to Islamic fundamentalism are major liabilities, however, in that they frequently override his pragmatic instincts and cloud his judgment.

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62. There are a number of factors that have constrained serious coup plotting in previous years and to a degree may still operate in Nimeiri's favor. These include:

- A reasonably competent and effective security service, with a proven ability to break up or anticipate popular demonstrations without bloodshed by identifying or arresting and intimidating ringleaders.
- Rivalries among disgruntled elites.
- The relative economic comfort enjoyed by senior military officers under Nimeiri.
- The widespread perception among elites that Nimeiri can call on Egyptian and US support.
- Careful culling of elites by Nimeiri to eliminate potential rivals.
- A demonstrated ruthlessness when needed in dealing with coup plotters.

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- The traditional passivity of the Sudanese populace.
- The general perception that Nimeiri has come through over a dozen previous coup attempts and plots and has *baraka*, an Islamic concept roughly translated as being lucky.

While these factors have served Nimeiri well in the past, we believe that, overall, their impact has waned in recent months and will continue to do so.

63. In sum, we believe Nimeiri will have greater difficulty regaining the political initiative and restoring a stable political climate. He has survived for some years, less from popular support than from the lack of a political alternative. He is likely to become increasingly dependent on the questionable loyalty of the military and security forces. Even a dramatic gesture designed to ease his predicament, such as an improvement of relations with Libya, Ethiopia, or the USSR, would probably be insufficient to overcome the view, widely held by the Sudanese elite, that Nimeiri has outlived his usefulness.

Senior Officers Step In

64. Should Nimeiri die in office or become physically incapable of serving as President, First Vice President Omer El Tayeb [redacted] as the constitutional successor, would temporarily assume the presidency. The constitution calls for elections to be held within 60 days, but Tayeb almost certainly would face serious political challenges during this interim. Even if Tayeb were elected to a full term, he is disliked by many Army officers, who probably would eventually force him from office.

65. Senior military officers are the most likely to lead a successful coup against Nimeiri. They might move to preempt a similar action by younger officers upset over economic grievances or military losses in the south. In addition to Tayeb, potential coup leaders



Middle-Grade or Junior Officers Seize Power

66. If senior officers do not move first, a successful coup by middle-grade officers cannot be ruled out. Officers of this rank participated in the coup led by

Nimeiri in 1969. Midlevel officers have direct command over units large enough to help stage a coup, and Nimeiri has not yet purged the most promising leaders from this group. These officers might have some difficulty consolidating their power, but once in control they probably would oust most of Nimeiri's senior military leadership, which they consider corrupt and incompetent.

67. A seizure of power by junior officers is somewhat less likely although the possibility will increase over time. The junior officers appear the most vulnerable to recruitment by opposition political elements, especially radical groups on both the left and the right. They might not hold power for long, but a takeover by officers who espoused a leftist ideology probably would trigger clashes with less radical forces, similar to those between Nimeiri loyalists and the Ansars after the coup of 1969.

A Civilian-Military Coalition

68. In the event of civil disturbances in which junior officers and enlisted men appeared sympathetic to the rioters, senior officers might enlist the support of civilian opposition groups for a national coalition government. Such a regime probably would be dominated by the armed forces but also would include conservative Islamic sects such as the Ansars and the Muslim Brotherhood. In contrast to 1964—when the Abboud military government collapsed amid riots—it is less likely that civilians would dominate the new regime or that radical leftist parties would play major roles.

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Implications for the United States

If Nimeiri Remains in Power

69. The prospects for US-Sudanese relations if Nimeiri remains in power depend largely on his responses to Sudan's economic and security crises. If the current disagreements and the suspension of US aid were to continue, considerable damage could be done to the relationship, including possible threats to suspend the military access agreement.

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70. Nimeiri probably believes that the United States and/or Saudi Arabia will bail him out of his economic difficulties on his terms. He already has asked Washington to intercede on Sudan's behalf with the IMF and other donors. He probably will use Vice President Bush's forthcoming visit to Sudan and his own anticipated trip to Washington to test how far he can push the United States toward more lenient requirements

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for reform. Nimeiri will argue that major reforms would lead to growing political unrest at a time already made difficult by austerity measures.

71. If Nimeiri receives an unambiguous message confirming the current US position on economic policy, he may yet become convinced he will have to join other African leaders such as Somalia's President Siad and Zaire's President Mobutu in accepting the inevitability of sweeping reforms. The short-term economic and political costs to Nimeiri of doing so would themselves place strains on US-Sudanese relations—as would the difficulties Washington would encounter in meeting Sudan's needs—but these strains would probably be more manageable than those arising from the current deadlock over the fundamental direction of policy. In any event, Nimeiri is far more likely to continue doing too little too late as he gropes for ways to break US (and Saudi) resolve.

72. Nimeiri probably will take a similar approach toward the issue of military assistance. He probably believes he can capitalize on the southern insurgents' growing strength and US strategic interests in Sudan to force the US hand on military as well as economic aid. An additional card Nimeiri can play is his willingness to continue the emigration of Ethiopian Jews from Sudanese refugee camps to Israel. He refuses to concede the necessity of policy changes to rebuild southern confidence in his regime, preferring instead to focus on external causes of the problem.

73. During his visit to Washington, Nimeiri probably will renew earlier requests for military hardware. He might try to trade some economic reform for more military aid. If that approach proves unsuccessful, he probably would conclude anyway that a continuation of current US military aid, together with aid from Saudi Arabia and other sources, would be sufficient to ensure the loyalty of his armed forces.

74. A rapprochement between Nimeiri and Qadhafi would have indirect effects elsewhere in the region that would touch US interests. Egypt would initially be highly upset by a Libyan-Sudanese accord but later might see some benefits for itself, including an improvement of security in southern Sudan and an easing of pressure on itself for military assistance. The Saudis might give such an accord qualified support, reasoning—as they did in the case of the Moroccan-Libyan “union”—that it might constrain Qadhafi's subversive activity. North Africa would become more politically polarized, and weak states that are potential targets of Libyan troublemaking, such as Tunisia and Niger, might become more likely to conclude that they need

to strike their own deals with Qadhafi. The Somalis probably would calculate that their bargaining position had been enhanced vis-a-vis the United States.

If Nimeiri Falls

75. In the event of Nimeiri's departure, the United States, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia would be able to bring considerable influence to bear on a successor regime through economic and military assistance. While the Libyans and Soviets could dangle promises of military assistance, US, Egyptian, and Saudi influence would benefit from the perception widely shared by the Sudanese civilian and military leaderships that financial and economic assistance is vital, that a military solution to the southern insurgency is unfeasible, and that the Soviets and Libyans cannot deliver necessary economic and financial aid.

76. Any successor government is unlikely to experience a smooth transition, but internal stability probably would be best served by a government of senior or middle-grade officers not closely linked to Nimeiri. It would inherit all of the Nimeiri regime's problems with the economy and the southern insurgency, with the added burden of having to consolidate its hold on power. Such a regime also would be more friendly toward the United States and Egypt than would other possible successors. Even senior officers, however, would attempt initially to strengthen their domestic position by appearing more independent from foreign influence than Nimeiri was.

77. Any new military government would give high priority to ending the insurgency in the south, both by negotiating with the rebels and by trying to reduce their foreign support by improving relations with Ethiopia and Libya. Such a regime would also accept improved relations with the USSR. As a result, Khartoum probably would be neutralized as a base of operations for anti-Qadhafi dissidents but would remain wary of Libyan, Ethiopian, and Soviet subversion.

78. Sudan would support the US position on regional issues less frequently than it does now, and its support for Camp David might wane. It might suspend combined US-Sudanese military exercises, as well as withdraw temporarily Nimeiri's offer of military access and the right to pre-position US military equipment at Port Sudan. It would also probably cease outward cooperation with Egypt temporarily, including activities mandated by the integration charter in 1982.

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79. Nonetheless, a government led by senior military officers would still count on continued US economic and military support. Consequently, it would be unlikely to confiscate US investments, and it probably would eventually renew military access rights.

80. A military-civilian coalition would be less pro-US and pro-Egyptian, largely because of participation by the Ansars or Muslim Brotherhood. It would place more emphasis on Islamization than a purely military regime would, and it would be more anxious to appear neutral in foreign policy. It probably would rescind

Nimeiri's offer of military facilities but would continue to look to the United States for economic assistance. The USSR would remain a target of suspicion and would be unable to enhance its influence significantly.

81. In the less likely—but not impossible—event that younger middle-grade or junior officers with a radical or extreme leftist orientation came to power, US interests in Sudan and the region would be seriously damaged. We also would look for both the Soviet Union and Libya to probe for new opportunities to increase their influence.

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